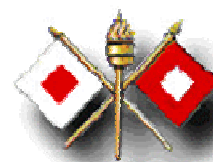




The Desert Voice

02—08 August 2004



COMMANDER'S CORNER

TIKRIT, IRAQ & AO DANGER – Let me begin this week by dispelling the rumor that I was AWOL the last two weeks. I did leave the theater and was TDY to CENTCOM Headquarters in Tampa, Florida for a week, and was fortunate enough to spend a couple of days in Germany enroute. It is good to be back. I'm not so sure the staff feels the same. They all greeted me with the obligatory, "Welcome back, Sir", but I sensed that they felt like all the fun they were having while I was away had ended. That's ok. I'm counting my absence as the R&R period for the staff. The Chaplain convinced me that the picture of the LSU Tiger banner on my door in last week's publication was the product of someone's sinister, digital imagery plot and that he was being set up for me to deny his planned R&R. After all, the Chaplain wouldn't lie, would he?

For those of you who are counting, we have officially crossed the half way point on our deployment. There are fewer days in front of us than are behind us. This fact should put a smile on everyone's face!

My week in Tampa was dedicated to planning the communications architecture for the OIF 3 rotation and spending time with the leadership of the 250th Signal Battalion, 42d Infantry Division who will be replacing us. Additional, I was attempting to sell the idea of leaving our equipment in place to provide a stable network for the 42d ID units to fall in on. While no final decision was made, I believe we were successful in gaining additional support for the idea. While this will make our exit much easier, the real driving force for leaving the network in place is that it will facilitate a

much smoother transition between divisions and set the 42d up for a successful tour in Iraq. We'll keep you all posted on the progress.

The current projection on R&R is that about 90% of the task force will be able to have taken R&R by the end of November. The division is trying to get R&R authorized for the month of December to enable us to give everyone the opportunity.

Finally, we said farewell this week to MAJ Withee, the Battalion Operation's Officer. He leaves us to go on to bigger and better things at USAREUR Headquarters in Heidelberg. We thank him for his selfless service to our unit and nation. He did an amazing job during his year in the battalion and while he will be missed, we are happy that he and his family are back together. We welcome MAJ Chuck Walters and his family to the battalion. Chuck comes to us from the Division Artillery where he's been serving as the S6. I've known Chuck a long time and believe me, operations are in good hands.

Thank you all for the thoughts and prayers. It does make a difference!

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HHC, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

Hello to the family and friends of HHC. This is my first time writing the weekly update so please have patience and bear with me. As you can see this is not CPT Steyer, but First Sergeant. I will be corresponding with you for the next few weeks while the commander is on R&R. He will be leaving tomorrow, much to our dismay, but we will somehow hold things down while he is gone. We have a large group departing for R&R which makes things a little hard back here but it is so good to see our soldiers get the chance to go home, relax, spend time with family, and enjoy some well deserved downtime. I can not begin to tell you how great of a job all of the soldiers have done and continue to do on a daily basis. I am so honored to be working side by side with these fine, well disciplined, motivated men and women. Everyday we are faced with new challenges that sometimes seem overwhelming and each day ends with every task complete and to standard.

So without further delay, let me highlight you on the week's activities. First and foremost we had the pleasure of promoting some outstanding soldiers. SGT Sakala and SGT Williams have entered the ranks of the Non-Commissioned Officers Corps. They are both an integral part of the Battalion Commander's Convoy Team and when they are not on the road they are a huge asset to me. They help me get day to day tasks done to improve our working and living conditions.



SGT Sakala and SGT Williams

Now I would like to do a small background story on another soldier. We also promoted PFC Robertson, one of our fuelers to SPC. Not only did she get promoted but she also made the decision to re-enlist for 4 more years. SPC Robertson does the weekly convoy run to OBJ Midland to re-supply this remote relay site with fuel and the place that her re-enlistment would take place. On Thursday the normal crew was out on Midland and CPT Romanowski (our S4 OIC) was preparing to start the festivities when two Blackhawk helicopters came out of nowhere. CPT Romanowski, being the inquisitive person that he is, went to investigate and see what all the commotion was about. To our good fortune CPT Romanowski found BG Mundt had landed to do a site walk through. CPT Romanowski saw this as a great opportunity for SPC Robertson and asked the General if he had the time to re-enlist one of the Signal Battalion's finest soldiers. Of course the General took the time (especially after hearing that they were from close to the same place in South Dakota) out of his busy schedule to personally do the re-enlistment and to spend some time with the convoy team talking and answer



BG Mundt and SPC Robertson

ing questions.

After this great event at Midland it was time to get back to work and perform some of the tasks that none of us like much, so I feel that I should share it with you all. Not only do we deliver food, water, and fuel to Midland, we also escort the porta-john cleaner trucks out to this remote site. We have the pleasure of also escorting them back to our FOB but prior to the convoy back we have to take the porta-john truck to empty its load.



I know that the picture doesn't really give you the full experience but hopefully you can understand a small piece of our dayJ

Back to another subject, we also promoted one of our outstanding DFAC soldiers to SPC. SPC Chavez was promoted and then packed her gear to go out to Midland for her three week rotation. Our cooks do three weeks at a time out there

cooking and providing quality meals for 65 soldiers.



SPC Chavez and CPT Steyer

I think I will bring this to an end now. I hope that I haven't bored you and that you all have a great week. Please continue to keep us in your prayers!!!

Tough 7 out!!

A COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

I want to start this week's newsletter with a correction to last week's story about SSG Warren's air conditioner wiring starting a fire. SSG Warren asked that I clarify that he wired the air conditioner which caught on fire in March and not last week. Also, SSG Warren informed me that he is not an unqualified electrician as basic electricity was part of the curriculum at his Advanced Individual Training. With those corrections out of the way, we'll begin this week's newsletter.

Our story this week is a touching story of combat camaraderie between the soldiers of Alpha Company, 121st Signal Battalion SEN team F72 and the 1st Infantry Division Second Brigade Combat team. Recently PFC Rodriguez was in the FOB Dagger dining facility during the dinner hour when he set his tray of food down

on a table while he went to get something to drink. After he had gotten a soft drink and was returning to his table, he spied someone eating from his plate. Cautiously, he approached the table where the unknown food bandit was devouring his dinner. As he neared the table, he saw the 2nd Brigade Combat Team Command Sergeant Major sitting at his plate eating his food. Feeling full of pride that he could share his food with a fellow 11D soldier, Rodriguez approached the Sergeant Major and said "Sergeant Major, not to be disrespectful, but that's my food."

The Sergeant Major looked around for a moment and filled with pride that he could share a meal with a brother in arms replied "I thought something was wrong" at which point he got up and moved to his own plate of

food where he promptly sat down and continued eating. Many people would have thrown that plate away and gotten more food, but PFC Rodriguez recognized it for the bonding moment it was and sat down and finished the food on the plate. Now when these two war veterans see each other they can feel the pride of knowing that they shared a meal. Literally.



PFC Rodriguez enjoying his shared meal

And speaking of disoriented soldiers, recently 1LT Gates and PFC Eckert headed in their trusty HMMWV to the fabulous FOB Speicher DFAC to enjoy lunch. 1LT Gates, an avid sports fan, enjoys eating lunch while watching ESPN on the satellite television provided in the DFAC. PFC Eckert, not an avid sports fan, decided to get his lunch "to go" and eat in the truck. After all, with the beautiful weather we have in Iraq, you'd have to be crazy to not want to eat outside.

After satiating his hunger for food and the latest sports news, 1LT Gates headed out to the HMMWV. He arrived at the truck only to discover that he could not find PFC Eckert. "Well" LT Gates thought, "he may have gone to the port-o-john." And so LT Gates waited. And waited. After several minutes, LT Gates began to suspect that maybe PFC Eckert hadn't gone to the port-o-john but back into the dining facility. LT Gates walked back through the dining facility looking high and low for Eckert, but to no avail. Then, deciding that if Eckert had somehow gotten lost he would return to the last familiar location, LT Gates waited at the HMMWV.

LT Gates checked the back of the HMMWV for flares he could use to signal Eckert if he hadn't returned before dark. After several minutes PFC Eckert appeared looking somewhat confused. "Where have you been Eckert?" asked LT Gates "I've been looking all over for you." "I guess I've been sitting in someone else's truck for the past 20 minutes" Eckert told him. "Well" said LT Gates, "all HMMWVs pretty much do look the same. How did you figure out it was the wrong truck? Did you get out after deciding you had been waiting too long and look at the bumper numbers?" "Not really," said Eckert "I thought it was weird when I got in and noticed it had a radio, a different steering wheel, and boxes in the back. But, I went ahead and ate lunch. I got out to stretch my

legs and that's when I saw you standing by this truck."

Our latest project at the DREAR has been the installation of conduit to cover all the wiring in the building. Keep in mind that in addition to the lines for tactical phones and internet that we normally run, we have lines run for commercial phones and commercial internet as well as all manner of gadgetry. Iraqi contractors did the initial installation, but it's been up to the soldiers to actually get the wiring in the conduit. Our team of dedicated professionals includes SGT Page, SPC Cecil and PV2 Clark, with some help from our data package team SGT Prager and SPC Dalia along with SGT Atkinson and SPC Kaimulua from Bravo Company, 125th Signal Battalion. This group of soldiers ensures that the wire is routed and tagged properly and put inside the conduit so it looks professional and still provides the quality internet today's soldier so desperately craves.



SFC Peaytt, SPC Dalia and SGT Prager stuffing the conduit with wire in the DREAR

We had two promotions this week to tell you about. The first one is SPC Rodriguez of the famed Alpha Company motor pool. SPC Rodriguez has been doing an outstanding job ensuring that our vehicles keep running. That is a daunting task in and of itself without adding the fact that the motor pool often has to work in 115 degree heat, with blowing dust and a shortage of repair parts. SPC Rodriguez's stellar performance was recognized with his promotion and we look forward to

great things from him in the future.



SPC Rodriguez receiving his promotion certificate



SPC Rodriguez receiving his celebratory soaking from SGT Hernandez

Our second promotion this week was SFC Craig. It was a day long ago when we gathered in a room in Kitzingen, Germany to learn that SFC Craig had made the E-7 list. None of us imagined on that day that we would be performing his promotion ceremony in Iraq, yet there we were. SFC Craig has been serving in an E7 position for a while as the Line of Sight assemblage (V)3 section sergeant. He performed brilliantly in that capacity as an E-6 and we know will continue doing a great job as an E-7. Next stop will be Platoon Sergeant. A non-alcoholic malted beverage toast to our new promotees!!!



SFC Craig receiving his promotion certificate.

This week in Alpha Company

sports action we're pleased to announce that SGT Welch and SPC Jackson won the FOB Speicher 3 on 3 Basketball Tournament. The third person wasn't an Alpha Company, 121st Signal Battalion soldier and so not worth taking the time to write about. The championship game was won by the first team to score 11 baskets. Towards the end, the game was tied 10 to 10. It was SGT Welch and SPC Jackson's superior basketball skills that scored the 11th and winning basket. An O'doul's

Amber non-alcoholic malt beverage toast to our game champions!

Well, the halfway point is upon us and the soldiers are showing no signs of slowing down. Life moves at a fast pace here, which is a good thing, as it make the time go by that much more quickly. I know that the more read about our little slice of paradise, the more you want to visit. We're saving a spot for you. All we need is you. Wish you were here. XOXOXO

B COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALON

Greetings from FOB Warhorse!! It has been a very busy week for us. We had a couple of promotions, a small fire, and some entertainment of our own kind. We even started the first project for the Blackhawk Construction Company.

This week we promoted to very deserving individuals. Both are very good at their jobs, and both are very good at construction. On Saturday we promoted SPC Zirbser to the rank of SGT. SGT Zirbser has been an integral part of F31 on LSA Anaconda. He has also helped make their work areas one of the best around. He has built or renovated the building they stay, their storage building, and has even built there own gym. We also promoted PFC Yarley to the rank of SPC. SPC Yarley has been working very hard as one of our V3 operators, that has made NC52 very successful. But like SGT Zirbser, SPC Yarley's talents do not stop there, he has been a very integral part of the new Blackhawk Construction Company. Congratulations again to the both of you, and to their families these two are top notch soldiers.



Pinning SPC Yarley

Yes, we had a small fire this week. It was in the Node Center, but let me assure you no one was hurt in the fire, actually to this day we are not sure what happened or how. But it was our first big issue NC52 has had since they went into system. So they are running pretty good. It only took a little over 24 hours to get her all fixed up again, and NC52 is back up and running just where it left off.

We even had some cheesy entertainment this week. As I am not ashamed to say, that I have a string of bad luck with chairs. I managed to break two chairs this week. Still not quite sure how, but I did. After spending considerable time on my back laughing, and getting laughed at, I just chalked

it up to just one of those things. But even though I was laying on my back, us signal folks still seem to have trouble with some of todays technology. Lately a new device we acquired called a Digital Sender has been the source of great entertainment for some of us, great angst for others. Now the Digital Sender is like a scanner, but it does more than one page at a time. Now that does not sound too hard to work does it? Well for our mighty XO LT Kato and SGT Matelski, they seem to be somewhat challenged by this device, on many occasions I have to cover my ears. I do not know if I am old enough to hear some of the words that leave their mouths. Actually they do not say that much, but it is pretty funny to hear grown men threaten the life of a piece of equipment. If it was up to them, there would be a new Olympic Event this year, Digital Sender Toss.



SGT Matelski trying the Digital Sender

Yes, we did start our own construction company. Mainly because we needed to get some things built around here, just to make things a little better. Our first project is a 20' x 50' building that will be our new supply room, EMS, mail room, and MWR area. The main reason we wanted to build this, is because we needed the extra room, and the tents that these things in now, are getting pretty bad. So we decided to do what we needed to do, to make this place a little better than we found it. The project code named "Double-Wide," should be finished in about a week. With 1SG Peaytt as lead foreman, we cannot go wrong. Besides how bad

can he be as a foreman, today he let me run around and play with a chainsaw?



Our construction crew



1SG Peaytt loves him some paperwork



How he really feels about paperwork

Well this week has flown by for us, I hope that is a good sign of things to come. The faster time flies for us, the faster we can all come home. Thank you for all your support. Take care and have a great week!!!



SSG Dale just wanted to say "Hello"

C COMPANY, 121ST SIGNAL BATTALION

Greetings from Iraq. August is upon us, and we are all happy to knock another month off of the books. Friday was a very happy day here as we cross the 180 days deployed hurdle – HOO-RAY! Our other reason to celebrate this week was on Tuesday, the LEN crossed a hurdle of its own – ONE MILLION CALLS PROCESSED! This is definitely another reason to celebrate. But hey – who really needs a reason? Stay tuned next week for the stories and pictures from our party...



Very proud members of LEN 54 on the day they processed their one millionth call!

As for the great Charlie Rock

info to pass along, the first order of business is a re-enlistment. We were very proud to reenlist SPC Smith Rimpel for another 4 years in our great Army. SPC Rimpel is a generator and air conditioner mechanic, and trust me – he stays extremely busy with this 120-degree heat taking its toll on our equipment. When asked about his decision, he said, "it is something I have always known that I wanted to do." Thanks for staying Army!



SPC Smith Rimpel taking his oath to support and defend our constitution 4 more years!



SPC Nauss

Next, I would like to share some of the high-speed training that our Rock troops have been conducting. First off, 1SG gave a great class to all the NCOs on NCOERs. It isn't easy to write your first one, so he broke it down for everyone to understand and brush up on. Coupled with his counseling NCOPD he gave a few weeks ago, I am excited about the products we are seeing these days! Next, our Motor Pool came out to remind us all on the basics of PMCS. After the class, 1LT Heather Gunther was quoted as saying, "I feel like I can be on the pit crew on the NASCAR circuit now!" Finally, after so many Amazon.com boxes in the orderly room on mail days, 1SG and I decided it was time for a financial class. We had a visit from 106th Finance on some ways to save this great deployment \$\$\$ for our future.



Motor Pool Superstars teaching PMCS class to the rest of the company.



CPT Longwill and SPC Rimpel shake on it to make it official!

Last week, I told you about our 2004 Fantasy Football Draft that we held here at Charlie Rock Headquarters. Well, it turns out that SPC David Nauss has been holding out on his secret weapon that he assures me will win the season for him. Here he is pictured with his super duper, ultra top secret, always correct, sure to pick the winners Fantasy Sports Magazine.



1LT Gunther and 1LT Nagelvoort rotating through the PMCS stations.

As always, thanks for your constant prayers and support. All is well, and we look forward to seeing you all as soon as possible. Until next week – **ROCK STEADY!**

B COMPANY, 125TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Another week has gone by, again! Time seems to fly by and we believe it is definitely getting cooler and fall is approaching....its about 110 degrees on average instead of 130. Node Center 62 provided some parts to Node Center 63 for a project we were working on here and

worked to free up small extension node G32 for another mission. Node Center 63 and Headquarters platoon conducted a range and Node Center 63 was the FIRST platoon in Iraq to convert a local Radio Access Unit (RAU) into a remote super RAU capable of moving into the city to

provide phone and secure data services to units in the Brigade Combat team. Node Center 63 also put the finishing touches on a massive wiring project connecting the two sides of the Kirkuk airbase with voice and data. Headquarters platoon supported and tracked everything in the

company and a few people took some time to visit the city of Irbil in Northern Iraq.



Node Center 62 became a parts warehouse for the company and played a very vital part in the locating of the necessary equipment to construct another super remote access unit (RAU). Three vital parts were needed for this project to be successful. Super RAUs are normally placed with small infantry units to provide secure e-mail capabilities to send photos and information of current operations being conducted in the Atta Min province of Iraq. These infantry units have never had this technology in the past. This new innovation will greatly impact their ability coordinate with their higher headquarters and make Iraq a safer place.

Small Extension Node, G32, lead by SGT Correa, is about 95% ready to depart FOB Speicher. His team has done an outstanding job providing voice and data communications to the 1st Infantry Division Rear. The team has been working diligently to replace subscriber services to other small extension nodes (SEN). The limited amounts of wire resources has hindered the operation but was still completed with the help of SGT Atkins and SPC Kaimulua. G32 currently has zero phone subscribers and

14 secure internet computer customers. Soon there will be zero subscribers and G32 will be ready and available for another mission that may require their talents in our theater of operations.



SPC Ivey

The wire team led by SGT Atkinson and her assistant, SPC Kaimulua, continue to modernize the Division Rear with Promina telephones and data connections. The Promina system will eventually replace the tactical communications of Iraq. The efforts by SGT Atkinson and SPC Kaimulua lay the ground work to getting us home sooner. Keep up the hard work, we all appreciate it. Thanks.

Once AGAIN, the Mighty Node Center 63 had another high tempo week. We started of this week with the M-16, M-4 and M-249 qualification range here on FOB Warrior. The range itself was not the type of range that we are normally used to, but without question it served its purpose. The most significant event during the two day range occurred when SPC Herrup-Morse from the TSC

– 93 Satellite communications team (235th Sig Co from Fort Gordon) outscored all the soldiers on the range by firing 40 out of 40.



SPC Herrup-Morse holding her perfect score card

You can believe that many egos were damaged during this significant emotional event, traumatizing many of our very own Node Center 63 soldiers. There were also some of our dear Headquarters Platoon soldiers who were affected as well.



As mentioned above, this week we were able to accomplish another **first** in providing support to the Second Brigade Combat Team. The Node Center 63 team (SGT Williamson, SPC Donahee), in record time with the help of our EMS crew headed by SGT Holloway, completed the transformation of our Local RAU into another Super RAU. This process created another signal asset for the Brigade Combat team to use in support of the

many soldiers out helping establish peace and prosperity in Iraq.

Overall, an outstanding week with us accomplishing a range, a trip to Irbil, a conversion of a local RAU into a Super RAU, two massive wiring projects, and the freeing up of a small extension node we firmly prove we can accomplish anything we set our minds to here in Iraq. Be proud of your soldiers! Hele On!



A COMPANY, 115TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Recent hard work and dedication has not gone unnoticed for the soldiers of Alpha Company, 115th Signal Battalion. Just this week, four soldiers were promoted to the rank of Specialist. Meanwhile, individuals of an Alpha Company SEN team (D23) were each awarded the Army Commendation Medal.

Privates First Class Christopher Dodd, Jeffrey Mixon, Cedric Fuqua, and Jermaine Groce are E-3s no longer. These four soldiers were officially "pinned" as Specialists at Forward Operating Base Danger. Specialist Dodd is a M249 gunner on the 115th convoy team. Specialist Mixon is an LOS operator here in Tikrit, while Specialists Fuqua and Groce are the newest members of the D23 team.



CPT Sweeney promoting PFC Mixon to SPC.



PFC Fuqua & PFC Groce of the D23 team being promoted to SPC.

On Friday afternoon, three soldiers of the D23 team were presented with the Army Commendation Medal. The award was given for their communication support to the 3rd Brigade Combat Team in April of this year. Receiving the ARCOM were: team chief Sergeant Floyd Jones, Specialist Cliff Davis, and Specialist Allen Freeman.



SGT Jones, SPC Freeman & SPC Davis being presented their ARCOMs

The ARCOM states that the D23's members' "dedication to mission accomplishment contributed significantly to the success of the 3rd Brigade Combat Team's mission." Alpha Company congratulates the D23 team, as well as the soldiers promoted to specialists this week here at Danger. The 115th Signal Battalion continues its march toward "mission accomplished" for

Operation Iraqi Freedom II.

Specialist Sonya Harris

6 August 2004



**CPT Sweeney promoting
PFC Dodd to the rank of SPC
at FOB Danger**

B COMPANY, 279TH SIGNAL BATTALION

SSG Janine Barham Jordan, a native of Scottsboro since '86, runs the mailroom for Company B, 279th Signal Battalion. She is also responsible for mail for the entire 230th Forward Support Battalion, as well as, elements of the 629th Fast Surgical Team and the 121st Signal Battalion.



SSG Barham in the mailroom

She has nine soldiers working for her, four of them full time. Each company has a designated mail clerk who posts and distributes lists of incoming mail to Commanders. One of the clerks, SPC Arline Van Bever of Palm Bay, Florida, says Barham "shows great leadership and she's always there to help us out." She also noted that everyone is close in the mailroom and that helps with teamwork.

Barham and her team are at

the 38th Postal Company's Post Office when they open. They help unload containers of mail, sorting and sending it to other locations. Then they load and transport packages back to our mailroom, sort and post them alphabetically by company, and mark them with name and date. But wait...the morning isn't over yet. They return to the Post Office to get letters and insured mail. The letters are sorted by company and the insured packages are documented and secured in a separate locked room. Now it is time to open the mailroom for seven hours. I don't want their job but am thankful someone does it. Like SFC Mike Porch says, "Mail call is like Christmas."

To keep her mailroom running smoothly, Barham wrote an operations manual and ensures all postal and security guidelines are followed to the letter. Her mailroom has been praised as a model of efficiency and other clerks have been sent to her for advice on running other mailrooms.

Barham is definitely making the best of her time here. She is working on her Masters degree in

Computer Information Systems in her down time by attending the University of Phoenix Online. She is one of the Public Affairs Representatives for Company B, is part of the 30th Brigade praise team choir, and helps to run an open-mic night once a month. I had the opportunity to go to one of the open-mic nights and let me just tell you, SGT Barham can sing.

At home she works for Alabama State Employment Service as a Veterans' Representative. For 23 years, she has helped to find jobs for veterans. After 16 years of military service, she is now officially a veteran herself.

She was married over the phone while we were in Kuwait to Kenneth Howard Jordan. I was surprised to find her slightly embarrassed still about the publicity they received. She will be changing her last name upon return from Iraq, but for now is holding on to the name that we all know her by.

C COMPANY, 711TH SIGNAL BATTALION

Hello families and friends back home. Another week has past and August has arrived! A new bunch of folks are scheduled to come home on R&R and they are very excited. Some plan on surprising their families, so if your soldier shows up on your doorstep – hoop and holler! Those soldiers who have already had the opportunity to go home and see their loved ones, and the many community supporters, have all come back refreshed, happy and ready to complete their mission here in Iraq. This week we are going to feature our three SENs (Small Extension Nodes) that are located at a different base than the rest of the platoon. SENs provide phone and internet access for users in other units like the Aviation Brigade, Engineer Battalions and Maintenance Support units. They are the rubber that meets the road providing service to the end user when it comes to our signal mission.

B51 is lucky enough to provide support to an Aviation Brigade and yes there are fringed benefits to that! The team consists of Team Chief SGT Craig Lay, SPC Alfred Hathcock, SPC Ricky Roberts and SPC Patrick Quinley.



SPC Quinley, SPC Hathcock, SPC Roberts and SGT Craig Lay

B52 provides support to two Army National Guard Engineer Battalions. The team consists of Team Chief SGT Fernando Lopez, SGT Brian Neely, SGT Joey Marquis, SPC Kenneth Speetjens and SPC Calvin Clark.



SPC Clark with fellow platoon member SGT Adams



SGT Lopez feeding the visiting Platoon Leader LT Beber

B53 is lucky enough to provide service to a Maintenance Support Battalion who in turn takes care of them in a "supply" kind of a way! The team consists of Team

Chief SSG Dennis Beckham, SSG Lisa Beckham, SGT Robert Pridmore, SPC Charles Mabins and SPC Troy Montgomery.



LT Beber, SGT Pridmore, SSG Beckman D, SSG Beckham L, SPC Mabins and 1SG Taylor



Auburn Fans SPC Matthew Eckman, SSG D'Andrea, SFC Bodiford and SPC Dan Eckman

In other news, the rivalry between Auburn University and Alabama University continues half way around the world. There has been flag napping and bragging rights at stake here. The facts are these: the Alabama Flag has taken a harder hit. It was the first to fly proudly over NC 14 and is now showing its battle wounds, whereas the Auburn Flag is fresh and untested against the desert sun and ripping sand storms. Who will win this year long battle.....will yet to be seen. ROLL TIDE! Or should I say "Go War Eagle"

CHAPLAIN

Coping with the Mid-Tour Blues – Part 1 of 4 – You are Normal:

In the last 14 years, since Desert Shield and Desert Storm, a great deal of study has been put into issues surrounding morale as affected by deployments. Morale is always an issue for the Army, but particularly so during these long separations. That concern extends to the families of deployed soldiers as well because, in order for soldiers to be mission capable, the home front must be cared for.

As we enter the month of August, which essentially marks the midway point for OIF II, morale becomes a big issue both here and in the homes of our family members. The studies have

shown that it is during this time that morale seems to be naturally low. The graphic below illustrates a “normal” morale flow during a long deployment. At the beginning, morale is high, but then when the reality of what has happened hits us and we’re drained of the adrenaline that got us that far dissipates, morale becomes low. After a time, however, morale comes back up to a “good” level and stays there for a while. But something happens that drives it back down...the midway point. This is a natural flow and is, in many ways, expected.

In light of that, what I want to say to you is this: It is both normal and okay to be fed up with

this separation. It’s not easy and we all know that, so let’s not pretend that it is. After all, we’ve been here for six months and we still have another six months to go. We might even ask the question “Is there a light at the end of the tunnel?” We’re feeling it here and so are you there.

But be encouraged, we will get through this time if we continue to do what has gotten us this far. Over the next three weeks, in my portion of this newsletter, I’ll share some helpful hints on how to cope positively with these “mid-tour blues.” But until then, know that you are normal, the world is not falling apart, and God is still in control.

